



DSHS STATEWIDE SURVEY OF WASHINGTON RESIDENTS

Prepared for:

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES

Prepared by:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of its strategic planning process, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) listens to feedback from its clients, the residents of Washington State. The DSHS Public Survey addresses a series of questions about public perceptions of DSHS services. To answer these questions, the Gilmore Research Group asked a random sample of 825 Washington State residents whether they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements about DSHS, and also asked for suggestions for improvement. The main questions and responses were:

DO STATE RESIDENTS THINK THAT DSHS IS DOING A GOOD JOB?

Most respondents were positive about the Department's job performance. A majority believes that the Department and its programs are doing a good job. Respondents were somewhat less positive about services for children and youth.

- DSHS does a good job overall. *63% agreed; 8% disagreed.*¹
- DSHS does a good job serving needy families. *62% agreed; 9% disagreed.*
- DSHS does a good job serving people with special needs (physical or mental health conditions or aging). *60% agreed; 7% disagreed.*
- DSHS does a good job serving children and youth. *55% agreed; 20% disagreed.*

DO STATE RESIDENTS THINK IT IS TOO DIFFICULT TO ACCESS DSHS PROGRAMS?

About one out of four respondents felt that it is too difficult to get most DSHS services. A lower number felt that it is too difficult for needy families to get food stamps and welfare grants. Respondents mentioned barriers to access including paperwork, waiting times, eligibility requirements and lack of information.

- It is too difficult for needy families to obtain medical care and medical insurance. *23% agreed; 40% disagreed.*
- It is too difficult for needy families to get food stamps and welfare grants. *17% agreed; 44% disagreed.*
- It is too difficult for people with special needs to obtain services like medical care, mental health care, drug and alcohol treatment, help finding and keeping jobs, and help caring for themselves. *27% agreed; 31% disagreed.*
- It is too difficult for people with special needs to get welfare grants and services. *26% agreed; 34% disagreed.*

¹ The remaining respondents were neutral or didn't know.

DO STATE RESIDENTS THINK THAT SERVICES ARE PROVIDED TO PEOPLE WHO SHOULD NOT RECEIVE THESE SERVICES?

Overall, about one in four respondents felt that DSHS gives services to people who should not receive them. A larger number (about four out of ten) said that DSHS gives food stamps and welfare grants too often to families who shouldn't get them. Respondent comments showed concerns about abuse by specific groups, and also recognized the challenge of determining who is "deserving."

- DSHS gives family medical care and insurance too often to families who shouldn't get them. *24% agree; 43% disagree.*
- DSHS gives food stamps and welfare grants too often to families who should not get them. *41% agree; 26% disagree.*
- DSHS gives special needs services (like medical care, mental health care, drug and alcohol treatment, help finding and keeping jobs, and help caring for themselves) too often to people who shouldn't get them. *26% agree; 38% disagree.*
- DSHS too often uses special needs programs to give welfare grants and food stamps to people who shouldn't get them. *29% agree; 35% disagree.*

HOW DOES EXPERIENCE WITH DSHS PROGRAMS INFLUENCE PERCEPTIONS OF DSHS?

The following groups were most likely to agree that DSHS and/or programs within DSHS do a good job²:

- Those with personal experience with services for clients with special needs due to physical or mental health conditions or aging
- Those who learned about DSHS services from friends and family
- Those who named workplace sources for information about DSHS

Persons who had personal experience with services for children and youth were least likely to feel that DSHS and its programs do a good job. Services for children and youth are usually involuntary and involve child abuse, child neglect, foster care, and youthful offenders.

Opinions about DSHS's distribution of services varied greatly based on respondents' experience and the specific program in question. Often the same group would espouse views with contradictory policy implications: It is too difficult to access a service and the service is too often given to the undeserving.

² Differences between groups are listed only if the difference is statistically significant, $p < .05$.

HOW DO DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES INFLUENCE PERCEPTIONS OF DSHS?

People who were most likely to agree that DSHS and/or programs within DSHS do a good job tended to be:

- Younger
- Female
- Less educated
- Hispanic or of some other minority background

Demographic characteristics were also related to perceptions of the distribution of services:

- Respondents with lower incomes and, in many cases, less education were more likely to believe both that services are too difficult to access and that the undeserving receive too many services.
- Additionally, residents of Eastern Washington and males were more likely to feel that DSHS services go to the undeserving.

HOW DO STATE RESIDENTS THINK THAT DSHS CAN IMPROVE SERVICES?

Respondents had a number of suggestions to improve DSHS services. The dominant themes included:

- DSHS needs more staffing and funding. DSHS staff is overworked.
- Need for more follow-up and monitoring of DSHS cases.
- Need for more and/or better services for children and youth.
- Need for a change in standards. (Respondents mentioned a need to both tighten and ease up on standards such as eligibility.)

BACKGROUND

PURPOSE

The Washington Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is committed to continuous quality improvement in services to its customers, the residents of Washington State. Secretary Dennis Braddock and DSHS senior leadership commissioned this survey and report as part of the agency's strategic planning process. The information that this survey provides will assist agency leadership in charting a future course for DSHS.

The survey is designed to answer the following questions:

- Do state residents think that DSHS is doing a good job?
- Do state residents think it is too difficult to access DSHS programs?
- Do state residents think that services are provided to people who should not receive these services?
- How does experience with DSHS programs (personal, media or job experience) influence perceptions of DSHS?
- How do demographic factors (age, gender, race, education, income-level and geographic location) influence perceptions of DSHS?
- How do state residents think that DSHS can improve services?

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This survey of 825 adult residents of Washington State was conducted by telephone between May 30, 2001 and July 8, 2001. The questionnaire (see Appendix 7) was initially developed by the Research and Data Analysis Division of DSHS. The Gilmore Research Group of Seattle, Washington, performed a pretest of the survey and administered the final version.

Telephone numbers were randomly selected in order to contact residents across the state. To insure adequate representation of households in the less populated eastern portion of the state (counties east of the Cascade Mountains), telephone numbers were selected at a somewhat higher rate there than in Western Washington.

Of the 825 completed interviews, 793 were conducted in English and 32 in Spanish. A total of 2,902 telephone numbers were called and 1,621 reached an eligible household. Of the households reached, 51% agreed to participate.³ See Appendix 2, Table A1 for a complete description of the disposition of each call.

³ The adjusted CASRO response rate was 39%. See Appendix 2 for details.

ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS⁴

The average age of respondents statewide was 43.6 years. About one-fifth (21%) were college graduates and nearly one-third (32%) had completed at least some college coursework. Forty-six percent (46%) of the interviews were completed with males and 54% with females.

Most respondents (84%) reported their race as White; 3% were Asian; 2% were African American; 2% were American Indian; 1% were Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; 6% were “something else,” and 2% did not answer. A separate question addressed ethnicity; 9% of respondents reported they were Hispanic.

The median household income bracket for respondents statewide and for those from Western Washington was \$35,000 to \$50,000 per year. For respondents from Eastern Washington, the median income bracket was \$25,000 to \$35,000 per year.

ANALYSIS METHODS

Information presented in the survey’s tables is weighted to the distribution of the Census 2000 population by gender, age, and region (East and West of the Cascades). Differences between groups are presented in this report only when they are statistically significant at the .05 level (the likelihood of the difference occurring by chance alone is less than 5 times out of 100).

⁴ This description of survey respondents uses unweighted data. A complete demographic profile of respondents, both before and after weighting, is provided in Appendix 1.

KNOWLEDGE OF DSHS PROGRAMS

For the interview, DSHS services were grouped into three main program types: services for needy families, for people with special needs, and for children and youth.⁵ These three program groupings are based on the sorts of problems that generate the need for services. Respondents were asked after the description of each program type if they were aware that these services were part of what DSHS does.⁶

- **72% were aware of services for needy families with children.** The survey describes these services as follows: *“DSHS gives needy Washington families with children food stamps, medical insurance and medical care, and up to five years of welfare grants. DSHS helps these families find and keep jobs and they also make sure that child support payments get to children who are supposed to receive them.”*
- **57% were aware of services for people with special needs.** The survey describes these services as follows: *“DSHS serves people who need help because of physical or mental health conditions or aging. For example, some people are deaf or blind, confined to bed or unable to walk. Others may have mental illness, Alzheimer’s disease, developmental disabilities or mental retardation, or addiction to drugs or alcohol. Often only low-income people can get these services. Services include medical care, mental health care, drug and alcohol treatment, welfare grants, food stamps, help finding and keeping jobs, and help caring for themselves, either in their own homes or in nursing homes or other institutions.”*
- **56% were aware of services for children and youth.** The survey describes these services as follows: *“DSHS investigates reports of child abuse and neglect, protects those children if needed, and provides foster and adoptive homes. DSHS helps at-risk pregnant women learn to care for themselves and their babies and helps families deal with difficult and run-away teens. Also DSHS operates homes, school, institutions, and parole services for juveniles convicted of crimes.”*

Respondents were asked if they had personal experience with each DSHS program group. Of those who said yes, over half had used the services themselves or helped a relative or friend access services. A number of other respondents had gained personal experience through their jobs.

⁵ DSHS services to clients are administered by five Administrations and several different programs. The three groupings used in the survey cross program and administration lines.

⁶ Appendix 3 provides details about awareness of programs.

- 35% had some sort of personal experience with needy family services
- 20% had some sort of personal experience with special needs services
- 16% had some sort of personal experience with child and youth services⁷

Aside from personal experience, knowledge about DSHS came mostly from

- discussions with friends, relatives and acquaintances
- newspapers and magazines
- television and radio
- the workplace or union⁸

Survey participants were asked specific questions about each service type only if they reported knowledge of that service type.

⁷ Appendix 4 provides details about personal experience.

⁸ Appendix 5 provides details about sources of knowledge.

RATINGS OF DSHS PERFORMANCE

RESULT SUMMARY

Respondents were asked to rate DSHS performance, overall and by program area.

Overall Performance: More than six people out of ten (63%) said they agreed or strongly agreed that DSHS does a good job overall. Less than one person out of ten (8%) said they disagreed or strongly disagreed. The remainder (30%) were neutral or didn't know. These answers were provided in response to the following question:

"We have talked about many of the services that DSHS provides, including services to needy families, children and adolescents and persons with special needs. DSHS provides many other services, including licensing and certification for many facilities and workers who provide care to persons with special needs, and emergency help to refugees. When you think of ALL the things that DSHS does as a whole, would you agree or disagree or feel neutral that DSHS does a good job overall?"

Program Area Performance: Respondents who reported some knowledge of services in each program area (needy families, children and adolescents and persons with special needs) were asked whether DSHS does a good job in that area. Most responses were positive, but respondents were less positive about services to children and youth.

- More than six people out of ten (62%) agreed or strongly agreed that DSHS "does a good job" of serving needy families. Less than one out of ten (9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. The remainder (30%) were neutral or didn't know.
- Six people out of ten (60%) agreed or strongly agreed that DSHS "does a good job" of serving people with special needs due to physical or mental health conditions or aging. Less than one out of ten (7%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. The remainder (33%) were neutral or didn't know.
- More than five out of ten (55%) agreed that DSHS "does a good job" of serving children and youth. Two out of ten (20%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. The remainder (27%) were neutral or didn't know. (These services include child abuse and neglect investigations, foster care and adoption services, and services to youthful offenders.)

Who Is Satisfied with DSHS? Persons who were more likely believe that DSHS and/or specific programs do a good job included those who were younger, female, less educated, lower income, and Hispanic or of some other minority

background. People who learned about DSHS from the workplace or friends and relatives, and those with experience with special needs services were also more positive about some programs. Most likely to be unhappy with DSHS were those with personal experience with the primarily involuntary child and youth programs, such as child protection, foster care, and services for juvenile offenders.

Comments on DSHS Performance. The verbatim comments that accompany a survey often help to explain and give depth to the survey's findings. The only open-ended question in this survey asked respondents how DSHS should change how they provide services. Many suggestions were offered—both by the small percent who were unhappy with DSHS services and by the many more who were satisfied or neutral. On the whole, comments suggested that DSHS provides a needed service under a number of constraints – and that there is room for improvement. Examples of specific suggestions for improvement are addressed throughout the next sections of this report. Less specific comments addressing overall performance tended to be positive, as in most of the following examples:

“I think they provide a needed service.”

“I think they do a good job. I think they help people.”

“I think what they are doing right now—getting people employed, getting them back into the work field—I think what they are doing now is great.

“I’m surprised at how much they do.”

“I just have seen them do a good job over and above.”

“Wonderful tool for our state and its people, especially with children and the needy (handicapped and elderly).”

“. . . I’ve dealt with a lot of people at DSHS who have tried to help us and I appreciate that very much.”

“I have no recommendations for changes—I think they do a great job—fantastic!”

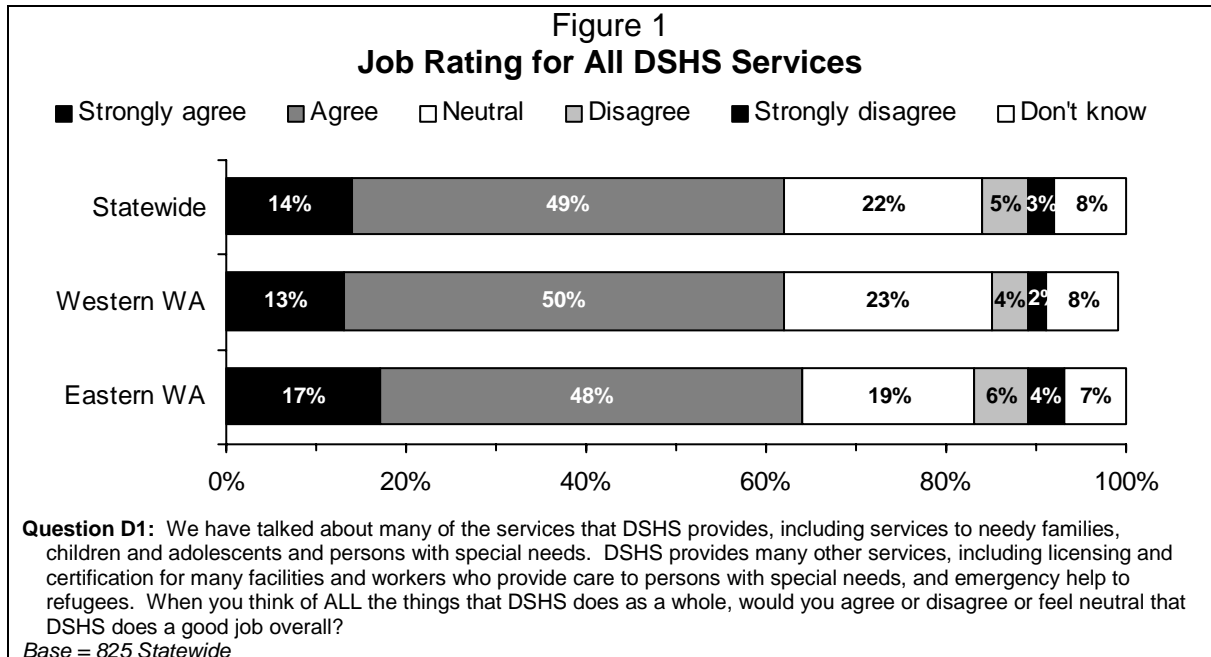
“I deplore the idea of the government doing all these services for people in need. They write all these laws and regulations that are mostly idiotic . . . The government divorced itself from common sense and agencies like DSHS are an example.”

“It seems to me that things are going great. It seems that they are doing a good job of taking care of those different groups and there isn’t a lot of abuse or anything.”

“I think they do the best they can with their resources.”

OVERALL RATING FOR DSHS SERVICES

Over six out of ten (63%) said they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “DSHS does a good job overall.” Less than one in ten (8%) said they disagreed or strongly disagreed. Figure 1 shows the detail.



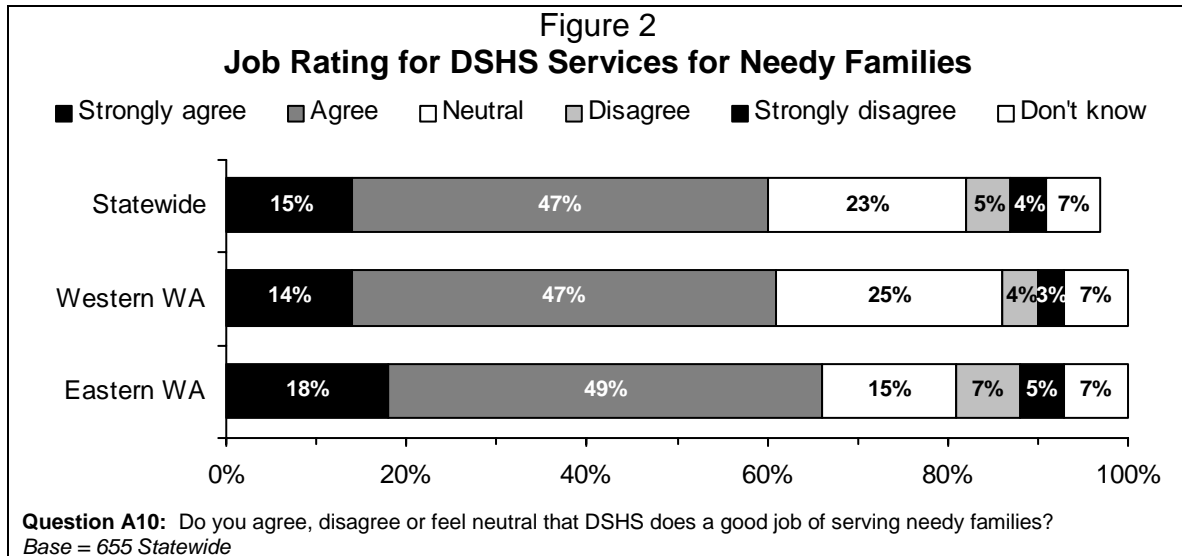
Some subgroups were more likely than others to agree or strongly agree that DSHS does a good job overall. These included:

- Those with a high school diploma and no college (74% agreed that DSHS does a good job), compared to those having some college (58%)
- Those with household incomes of less than \$25,000 per year (70%), compared to those with incomes of \$50,000 or more annually (59%)
- Women (67%) rather than men (59%)
- Those aged 18 to 24 (73%), compared to 35 to 44 year-olds (58%)
- Those who learned about DSHS through their workplace (73%), rather than TV and radio (62%)

Those who had experience with DSHS child and youth services were less likely to think DSHS does a good job (15% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement) than persons who lacked this experience (6% disagreed). (Child and youth services include child abuse and neglect investigations, foster care and adoption services, and services to youthful offenders.)

RATING FOR NEEDY FAMILY SERVICES

More than six out of ten (62%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “DSHS does a good job of serving needy families” (Figure 2). Only one out of ten (9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.



Some subgroups were more likely than others to agree or strongly agree that DSHS does a good job with needy families:

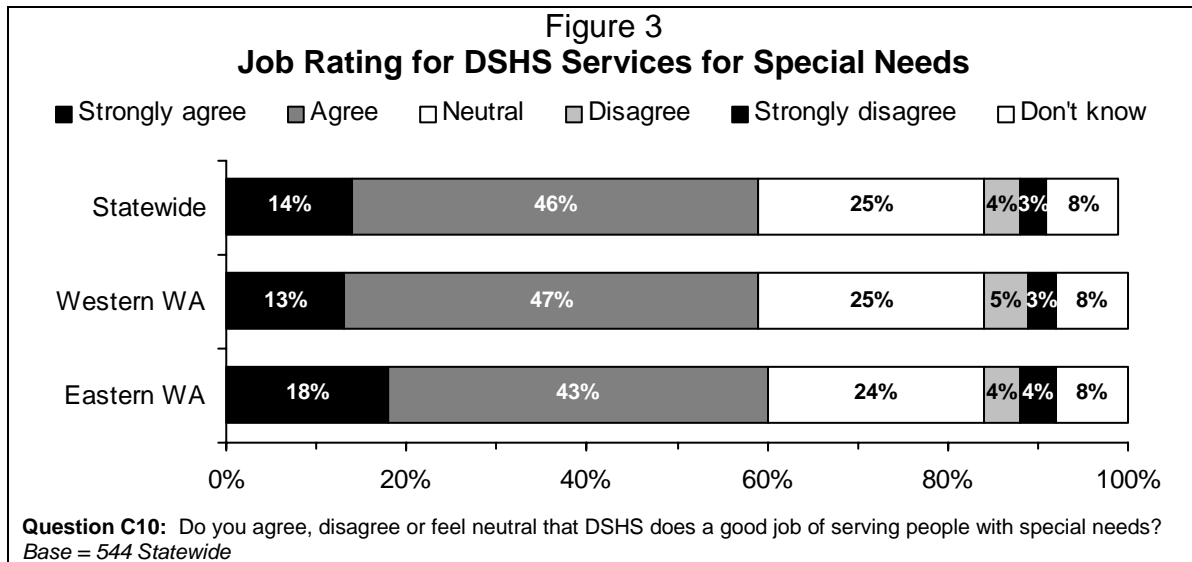
- Those 18 to 44 years old (66%) and 55 to 64 years old (65%), compared to those 65 to 74 years old (43%)
- Those who learned about DSHS services from the workplace (67%) or friends and relatives (66%), compared to those who learned about DSHS from newspapers and magazines (54%) or TV and radio (53%)

Other subgroups were less likely than others to feel that DSHS does a good job with needy families (that is, they tended to disagree or strongly disagree with the statement):

- Those with some college (12% disagreed), compared to those with no college (6%)
- Those with personal experience with DSHS child and youth services (16%), compared to those with no such experience (7%)

RATING FOR SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Asked how well DSHS serves persons with special needs (that is, people needing help because of physical or mental health conditions, or aging), six out of ten (60%) agreed or strongly agreed that DSHS does a good job. Less than one in ten (7%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Figure 3 shows the detail.



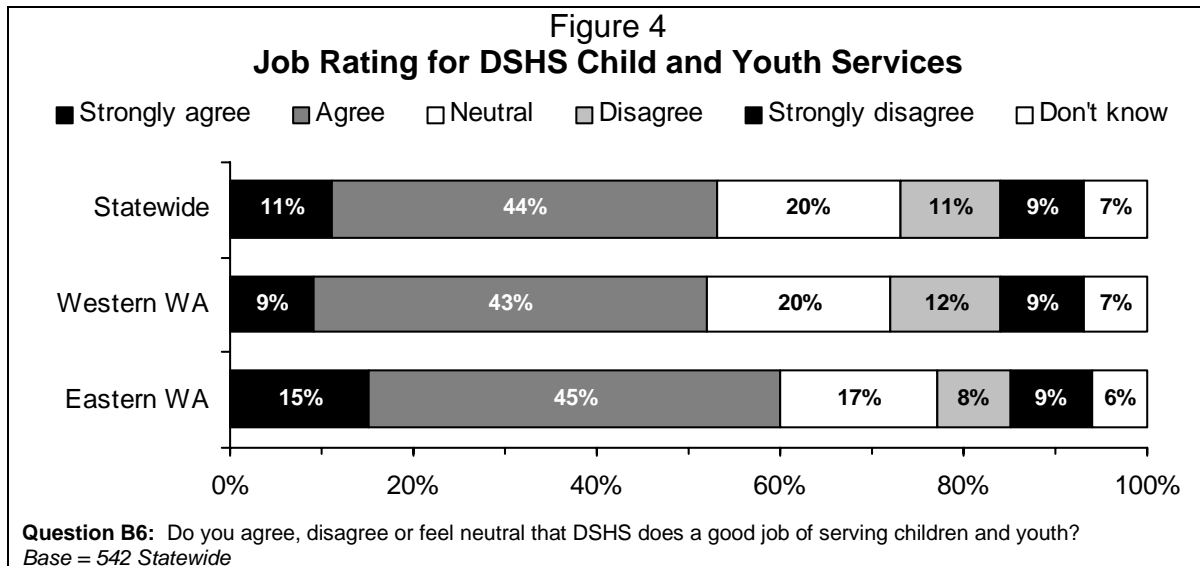
People who had personal experience with special needs services were more likely to agree or strongly agree that DSHS does a good job serving people with special needs (68% agreed), compared to those who didn't have special needs experience (56% agreed).

Some subgroups were less likely to feel that DSHS does a good job of serving people with special needs (that is, they tended to disagree or strongly disagree with the statement presented):

- Those with some college education but no diploma (11% disagreed), compared to those with high school education or less (5%)
- Those aged 45 to 64 years old (12%), versus those aged 25 to 34 years (3%)

RATING FOR CHILD AND YOUTH SERVICES

Asked how well DSHS serves children and youth who were abused, neglected or convicted of crimes or otherwise at risk, over half (55%) agreed or strongly agreed that DSHS does a good job with those situations. Two out of ten (20%) disagreed. Figure 4 shows the detail.



Some subgroups were more likely than others to agree or strongly agree that DSHS does a good job with child and youth services:

- Minorities (76% agreed) and Hispanics (74%), versus White non-Hispanics (51%)
- Those aged 18 to 24 years (67%), versus those aged 65 to 74 (38%)
- Those with household incomes under \$25,000 per year (63%), compared to those with household incomes over \$50,000 (47%)
- Those with no college (63%), compared to those with some college (50%)

One subgroup was less likely than others to believe that DSHS does a good job with child and youth services (that is, they tended to disagree or disagree strongly with the statement). This group was comprised of people who had personal experience with those services (32% disagreed), compared with those who did not have this experience (16% disagreed). (These services include child abuse and neglect investigations, foster care and adoption services, and services to youthful offenders.)

ACCESS TO SERVICES

The next three sections examine three aspects of the public's perception of access to DSHS services:

- **Difficulty:** *Is it too difficult to obtain services?*
- **Distribution:** *Are services provided to those who should not get them?*
- **Interrelationship:** *What is the relationship between perceptions of difficulty of access and distribution of access?*

Each section addresses the public's perception of access to four specific types of service – two types of service for needy families and two for those with special needs.

- *Needy Families.*
 - *Access to Medical Care and Medical Insurance.*
 - *Access to Food Stamps and Welfare Grants.*
- *People with Special Needs -- due to physical or mental health conditions or aging.*
 - *Access to Special Services -- like medical care, mental health care, drug and alcohol treatment, help caring for themselves, and help finding and keeping jobs.*
 - *Access to Welfare Grants and Food Stamps.*

The survey did not address the public's perception of access to the third category of DSHS programs, child and youth services, because these services are often not part of entitlement programs. Many of the child and youth services are involuntary programs like child protective services, foster care, and institutional and parole services for youth convicted of crimes.

DIFFICULTY OF ACCESS

RESULT SUMMARY

Is Access is Too Difficult? Overall, about 1 out of 4 Washington State residents indicated that it is too difficult to access DSHS programs—with a somewhat lower number feeling that it is too difficult for needy families to get food stamps and welfare grants. The survey asked four specific questions about difficulty of access.

- **MEDICAL CARE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES.** About one out of four Washington State residents (23%) agreed or strongly agreed that, “It is too difficult for needy families to get medical care and medical insurance.” Forty percent (40%) disagreed and 38% were neutral or didn’t know.
- **FOOD STAMPS AND WELFARE GRANTS FOR NEEDY FAMILIES.** Less than one out of five (17%) agreed or strongly agreed that, “It is too difficult for families to get food stamps and welfare grants.” Forty-four percent (44%) disagreed and 39% were neutral or didn’t know.
- **SPECIAL NEEDS SERVICES.** More than one out of four (27%) agreed or strongly agreed that, “It is too difficult for people with special needs to get services like medical care, mental health care, drug and alcohol treatment, help caring for themselves, and help finding and keeping jobs.” Thirty-one percent (31%) disagreed and 42% were neutral or didn’t know.
- **WELFARE GRANTS AND FOOD STAMPS FOR THOSE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.** More than one out of four (26%) agreed or strongly agreed that, “It is too difficult for people with special needs to get welfare grants for living expenses and food stamps.” Thirty-four percent (34%) disagreed and 41% were neutral or didn’t know.

Who Thinks Access is Too Difficult? In general, those with lower educational levels and less income were most likely to think that access is too difficult. People who had personal experience with special needs services were more likely to think that it is difficult for those with special needs to get services, food stamps and welfare grants.

How is Access Difficult? The detail found in responses to the survey’s open-ended question helps to identify the difficulties that DSHS clients encounter. Problems mentioned included paperwork, waiting times, eligibility requirements, and lack of information about services. Following are some of the pertinent responses to the question, “What changes do you think DSHS should make in how they serve needy families, children, youth and persons with special needs?”

GENERAL

“They just need to make it easier for people to get services.”

“Not make it so difficult for the little people to get help.”

“They need to make services more readily available and easier to access what is available. Many people who need services can’t read well and don’t have transportation and can too easily fall through the cracks.”

PAPERWORK/PROCESSING TIME

“Probably the process of getting in and getting an appointment. It’s a real hassle for me. Half the time I don’t know whether I qualify before spending lots of time and energy and paperwork just to be told sometimes that I don’t qualify. I personally had a very difficult, even rough time, getting help when I needed it.”

“I think some people who have tried to get help found the paperwork so involved and the time it takes so much, their needs could not be met in a timely manner,”

“There must be some way to cut back on the paperwork.”

“Also, the paperwork for services seems to take forever to complete, especially for those elderly like myself. Too many restrictions on these services. This makes it very hard for me with my medical needs. Particularly the time factor is critical to older people.”

“One thing, the paperwork is just insane. My brain wasn’t working properly when I was on it and it was a struggle filling it out when you are not well.”

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS/DECISIONS

“Need more compassion and make room for special cases . . . A lot of people who need help, need help sooner and need it before they get so deep they have difficulty pulling out”.

“I tried to get food stamps and was denied because my car was worth too much money.”

“My son has been injured, age 60 and he is a roofer, and fell and can hardly walk and they turned him down; they should make it easier for those kinds of people who can’t work to get help.”

“In 1997 I couldn’t work and I needed help for me and especially for my children and couldn’t get it – they said I didn’t qualify – and at this time I didn’t

have a job and needed welfare. I filled out all the information but they said this was not enough.”

“My wife is very sick with a malignant tumor and she needs money to pay specialists and there’s nothing for her right now.”

“If you don’t have children you can’t get help. It’s really hard to get into.”

“Personally, when my husband and myself needed food stamps last winter, we were having a very hard time and we were wanting temporary food stamps aid but were turned down. I think the rules and regulations for providing stamps to needy families are too rigid and too out of date. Rules should be modernized and made simpler to help more needy people.”

OUTREACH/INFORMATION

“Make all Washington residents aware of all these special services that would help more people a lot.”

“More local awareness so each community knows what is provided in each community . . . More representatives, more literature in schools, community centers, hospitals.”

“They need to get out and make people more aware of what they do and what services are available. I think they need to do a little more advertising.”

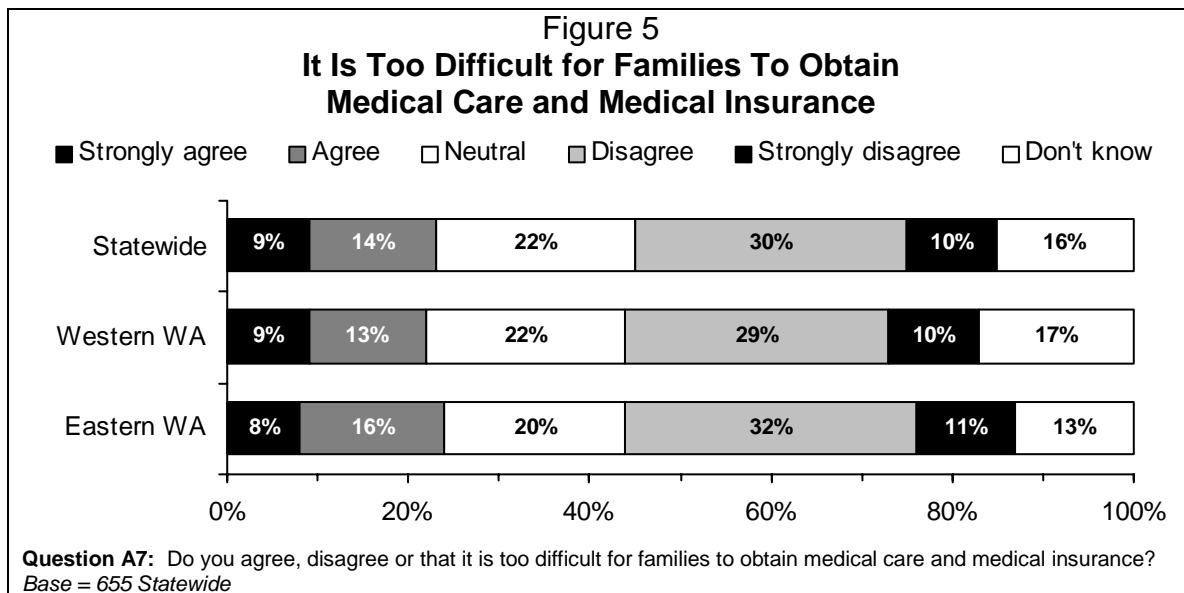
“They need to work more through senior centers and schools, community centers (YMCA, etc.) to get flyers out so more people are aware of their services and address the barriers of different languages.”

“I think the services should have more ways to get referrals – i.e. places like the Millionaire’s Club or other social services should be able to refer people to DSHS. DSHS needs to reach out more to the various social service agencies. Especially to foreign immigrants who don’t speak English very well and have no idea they actually qualify for some of DSHS services and programs. Maybe like also referrals from local church organizations.”

“They need to let the public know more and better about exactly what/which services are available through DSHS.”

NEEDY FAMILIES: DIFFICULTY OF ACCESS TO MEDICAL CARE AND INSURANCE

As Figure 5 shows, 23% of respondents statewide agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “It is too difficult for families to obtain medical care and medical insurance.” The remainder were divided between those who disagreed or strongly disagreed (40%), and those who were neutral or didn’t know (38%).



Some subgroups are more likely than others to feel it is too difficult for needy families to obtain medical services and insurance (that is, to agree or strongly agree with the statement presented):

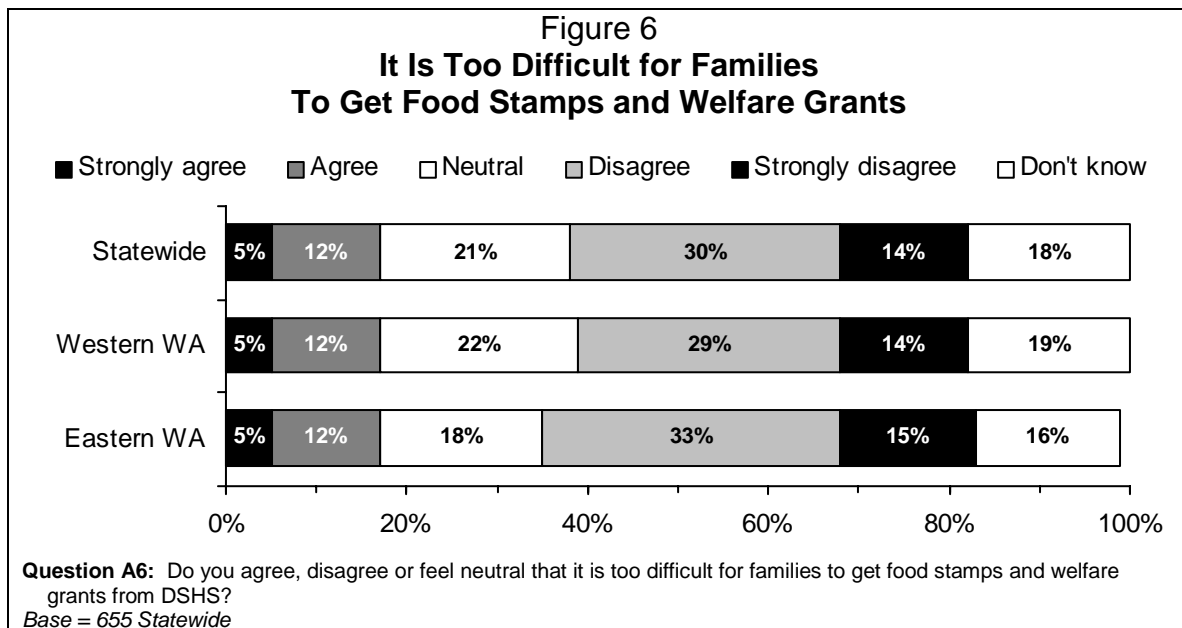
- Those with no college (26% agreed that it is too difficult), compared to those having some college education but no degree (18% agreed)
- Those with personal experience with DSHS services for children and youth (31%), compared to those who didn’t have this experience (21%)
- Those who knew about DSHS from friends and relatives (24%), newspapers and magazines (22%), TV and radio (21%), workplaces (25%), or other public places (25%), rather than those who specified no source (11%)

Some subgroups are less likely than others to feel that it is too difficult to get medical care and insurance (that is, to disagree or strongly disagree with the statement):

- Women (45% disagreed), rather than men (34% disagreed)
- White non-Hispanic people (41%), compared to minorities (22%)

NEEDY FAMILIES: DIFFICULTY OF ACCESS TO FOOD STAMPS AND WELFARE GRANTS

Only 17% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that, “It is too difficult for families to get food stamps and welfare grants.” Of the remainder, 44% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 39% were neutral or did not know. Figure 6 shows the detail.



Some subgroups were more likely than others to feel that getting food stamps and welfare grants is too difficult for families (that is, they tended to agree or strongly agree with the statement presented):

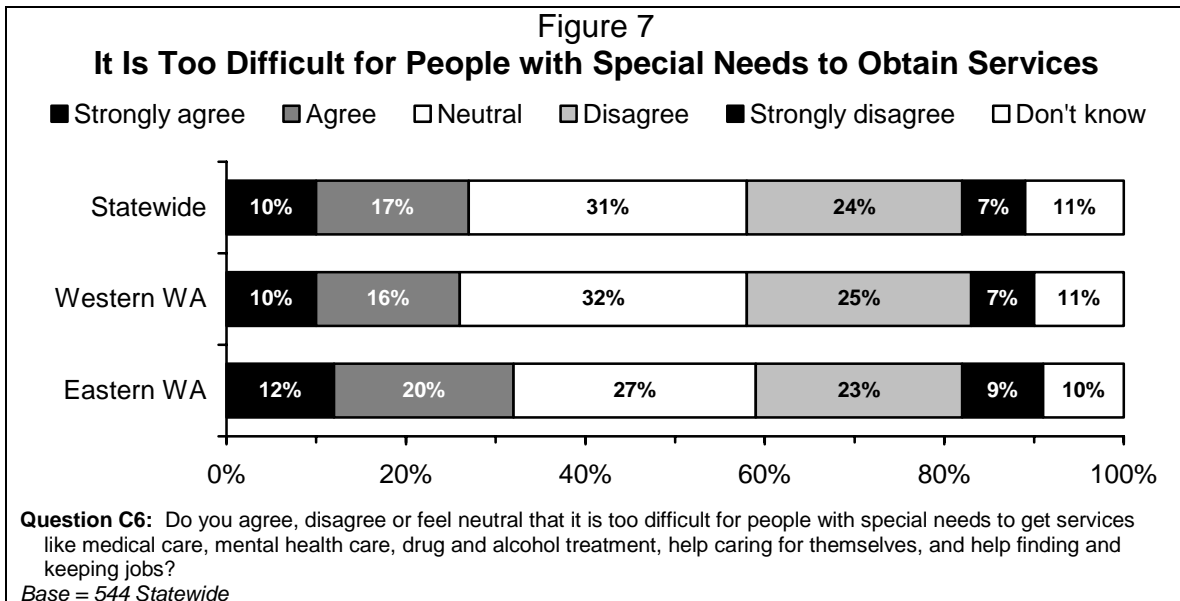
- Those with no college (25% agreed that is too difficult), compared to some college (16% agreed); and both of those groups without college degrees compared to college graduates (9% agreed)
- Those with household incomes less than \$25,000 per year (29%), compared to those with incomes of \$25,000 to \$50,000 (15%); and both those groups compared to those with household incomes of \$50,000 or more (8%)
- Those 18 to 24 years of age (31%) versus those over 45 years of age (11%)
- Those who are Hispanic (45%), compared to other minorities (21%) or White non-Hispanics (14%)
- Those who had personal experience with DSHS special needs services (25%), compared to those who didn't (14%)

Some subgroups were less likely than others to feel that getting food stamps and welfare grants is too difficult for families (that is, to disagree or strongly disagree with the statement presented):

- Those aged 45 to 54 years old (51% disagreed), versus 25 to 34 year-olds (36% disagreed)
- Those who had personal experience with DSHS needy family services (50%), compared to those without such experience (39%)

PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: DIFFICULTY OF ACCESS TO SPECIAL SERVICES

As Figure 7 shows, more than one in four respondents (27%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that, “It is too difficult for people with special needs to get services like medical care, mental health care, drug and alcohol treatment, help caring for themselves, and help finding and keeping jobs.” Of the remainder, 42% were neutral or didn’t know, and 31% said they disagreed or strongly disagreed.



Some subgroups were more likely to agree or strongly agree that it is too difficult to obtain special needs services:

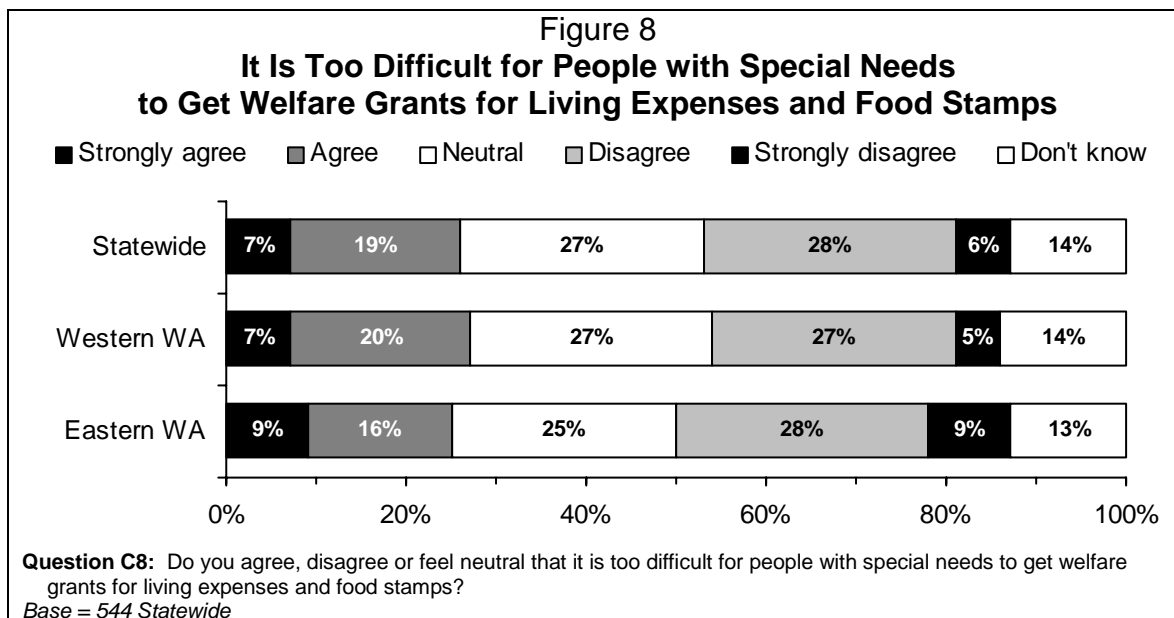
- Those living on less than \$50,000 per year (34% agreed that it is too difficult), compared to those with higher family incomes (19% agreed)
- Those 75 years old or older (46%), compared to those 18 to 34 years old (22%) or 45 to 54 years old (22%)
- Those with personal experience with DSHS special needs services (36%), as opposed to those who lacked this experience (23%)

Some subgroups were less likely to indicate that it is too difficult to get special needs services (that is, they tended to disagree or strongly disagree with the statement presented):

- Those who live on \$25,000 or more per year (36% disagreed), versus those who live on less (22%)
- Those aged between 25 to 74 years (33%), compared to respondents who were 75 years old or older (13%)

PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: DIFFICULTY OF ACCESS TO GRANTS AND FOOD STAMPS

More than one out of four respondents (26%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that, “It is too difficult for people with special needs to get welfare grants for living expenses and food stamps.” Of the remainder, 41% were neutral or didn’t know, and 34% disagreed or strongly disagreed (Figure 8).



Two subgroups were more likely than others to feel that it is too difficult for persons with special needs to get welfare grants and food stamps. (In other words, they were more likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement presented.) They were:

- Those in households earning \$25,000 per year or less (40% agreed that it is too difficult), versus those in higher-income households (21% agreed)
- Those with personal experience with DSHS special needs services (33%), compared to those who lack the experience (23%)

DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICES

RESULT SUMMARY

Are DSHS Services Given to Those Who Shouldn't Get Them? A number of respondents indicated concern that DSHS services are given to those who don't need them. The survey asked four specific questions about inappropriate distribution of DSHS services. In most cases, **about one out of four** respondents indicated that DSHS services are given to those who shouldn't get them. Food stamps and welfare grants for needy families prompted the most concern; more than **four out of ten** respondents thought these services were given to the undeserving.

- **MEDICAL CARE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES.** About one out of four Washington State residents (24%) agreed that, "DSHS gives family medical care and insurance too often to families who shouldn't get them." Forty-three percent (43%) disagreed, and 34% were neutral or didn't know.
- **FOOD STAMPS AND WELFARE GRANTS FOR NEEDY FAMILIES.** About four out of ten people (41%) agreed that, "DSHS gives food stamps and welfare grants too often to families who shouldn't get them." Twenty-six percent (26%) disagreed, and 33% were neutral or didn't know.
- **SPECIAL NEEDS SERVICES.** More than one out of four (26%) agreed that, "DSHS gives special needs services like medical care, mental health care, drug and alcohol treatment, help caring for themselves, and help finding and keeping jobs too often to people who shouldn't get them." Thirty-eight percent (38%) disagreed and 35% were neutral or didn't know.
- **WELFARE GRANTS AND FOOD STAMPS FOR THOSE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.** Nearly three out of ten (29%) agreed that, "It is too difficult for people with special needs to get welfare grants for living expenses and food stamps." Thirty-five percent (35%) disagreed and 36% were neutral or didn't know.

Who Thinks Services are Given to the Undeserving? Certain groups were more likely to believe that DSHS gives services to those who should not get them. These groups included people who were less educated, male, Eastern Washington residents, and those who did not learn about DSHS in the workplace. Additionally, respondents who were low-income, Hispanic, or elderly were more likely to indicate that *some* DSHS services are given to the undeserving.

Who Shouldn't Get Services? Open-ended comments again better define respondents' views about distribution of services. Almost all respondents approved of DSHS programs helping the needy. However, many respondents

felt that services are at times given to those who are not needy. Abuse of the system was by far the most frequent topic of comments. Some of the comments may have been prompted by the preponderance of survey questions addressing distribution of services, but this was obviously an issue of concern to many.

Some respondents mentioned groups they felt should not receive benefits: substance abusers, immigrants and non-citizens, and those who could work but do not. Other respondents told stories of abuse from their personal experience – many about the abuse of food stamps. Many respondents offered solutions to these perceived abuses, including suggestions for screening, monitoring and investigation, as well as tougher time limits. Some representative comments:

GROUPS WHO SHOULDN'T RECEIVE SERVICES

SUBSTANCE ABUSERS

"I do not think that druggies should get any kind of care."

"Some abusers use the money they receive for drugs and alcohol rather than food for their children."

"I don't believe that if you are an alcoholic and drug addict, the DSHS checks shouldn't be just handed out to them. They should honestly be in some type of rehab before they receive the DSHS checks for alcoholic and drug addict people."

"I wish that when mothers receive food stamps for themselves or their children they should have a drug test because I've known several cases where the mother is on drugs and receiving help".

"I think that especially for people on drug and alcohol programs, these people are taking advantage of this system."

"I don't think people addicted to drugs should get help from taxpayer's money. They chose to do drugs. I don't want to pay for their decision."

"And the people who are on drugs and alcohol - they get welfare - this is unfair."

"I strongly feel we should not be taking care of people who are drug addicts or alcoholics. Those are choices, and you should find out you are responsible for your choices."

IMMIGRANTS / NON-CITIZENS / RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIFFERENCES

"I do believe we get treated differently if the person is not Caucasian race. The programs are too oriented to non-Caucasian peoples. This is frustrating to those of us who sometimes need the help."

"I think that they help refugees much more than they help Americans. I sat over there . . . and I've seen white people -- well I've seen Vietnamese, Mexican and the other people taken care of in 20 minutes and a white person will sit there for a long time and who's paying the taxes?"

"Stop helping the foreigners; help our people right here."

"They need to take Americans into more consideration than all these immigrants that come in. 6 or 7 Mexicans get whatever they want."

"Make it easier for Caucasian people to get benefits. Programs shouldn't be oriented just toward certain ethnic groups. In my experience, other groups abuse the system more."

"I also think that our citizens in this country should receive benefits before the illegal aliens."

"The only thing I would say is people who are not citizens should not be receiving prolonged help. Prolonged help is after one month, two months."

"I think that refugees are able people and that they abuse it, and they feel that this country owes them something. And that they are just as able as I am."

OPPOSITE POINT OF VIEW – SOME PEOPLE BELIEVE NEWCOMERS ALSO NEED HELP.

"Also, when people don't have correct papers to be in the United States, why are these people not helped at all? I think they have the right to be helped."

"And also, people who are not residents here in the United States do not get this help - and that is not right."

THOSE WHO WON'T WORK

"They give it to people who don't need it a lot. To people who are just too lazy to go out and get themselves a job. I just think people physically able to work should work and not just milk the system."

"There is a tendency for some families to continue on DSHS who could go out and care for themselves or get jobs and take care of themselves".

“Do better investigation of people they serve. There are people who abuse the system like those that could be working but instead use DSHS services.”

“With working in a clinic, I think a lot of the people are just plain lazy and don’t want to work.”

“Some people are disabled but they are still able to get a job and getting too many grants.”

“There are some people who don’t want to work. That just takes advantage of DSHS. Rather than give them a check have them work for that. Cases be unemployed and get benefits. Looking for work too long. Should be taken off benefits. Have them work even if only 10 hrs a week or something like that. Everybody’s entitled to food, medical care and shelter. But should not be free. If can’t go to work should be volunteer if capable or able for that 10 hours a week.”

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE – THOSE WHO SHOULDN’T RECEIVE SERVICES

“For my sister, there was no incentive to work.”

“. . . some people come to this state and sign up for welfare and then return to their actual residences in other states. I personally know of at least 3 instances of this occurring in my recent experience.”

“From my personal experience, I have neighbors who receive services who can go out and buy a new car.”

“I see people who drive new vehicles yet still receive food stamps and sometimes other forms of help from DSHS.”

“If I can go down the street and see someone on welfare that doesn’t need it and they live better than I do and I’m working hard, I have a problem with that.”

“I see people buying lobster with food stamps and I’m buying hamburger.”

“I see too many people buy expensive stuff with food stamps. The majority of the people that are 18-20 with food stamps and on the Quest card buy expensive food with them. They take advantage of the system.”

SOLUTIONS

SCREENING

"Better screening. Better research to figure out whether a family needs it or not."

"I think that they should do more intense background checks on people they give help to because I've seen them help people that really don't need and then the people that really need it don't get it."

"Send more people out in field to check on recipients to make sure about abusing services and to make sure those who need it are getting it. Not just telephones are behind a desk. More in-service type training of employees so they know what to look for, or how to identify problem."

"More screening when people apply; they should check the records of the people who come in. I feel it is too easy to get on these programs."

"I think they need to find out who's in need and who isn't. We pay too many taxes for this kind of thing and we need to buckle down on it."

"Maybe screen families that need the help and those that don't. Some take advantage of system in some cases. Just better screening."

"There needs to be a more intense check and balance about the information clients provide to DSHS and whether it is valid or not. More verification seems called for because some people abuse this system."

"I think they ought to investigate people in their programs better cause there are a lot of people getting services that don't really need them in my opinion."

MONITORING

"I do think the level of monitoring needs to be increased so the right people get the help that they need, not just in the initial application stage, but later to see if it's still needed."

"Just to make sure that the help that they do provide is truly needed by people, and isn't getting abused and ruining for other people."

"There should be better scrutiny because I see abuses everywhere. There is no real monitoring, and people should be hired to check where fraud and abuse takes place."

"They should be investigated a little closer (the clients). They should monitor the people periodically."

"Monitor people who really need the service. There always cracks in any service, but a lot of times there are people who come in and really don't need the service and somehow get it. I feel if these people were checked more carefully then maybe the taxpayer money would not be wasted."

"More follow-up on the people who receive benefits to assess changes in circumstances."

"I guess one thing I've always heard about is that some people abuse the system and get away with it. So, better monitoring might be in order to restrict services to people truly in need."

FRAUD INVESTIGATION

"More thorough investigation especially re: complaints about fraud against the system."

"Put in better safeguards to investigate welfare frauds."

TIME LIMITS

"Welfare recipients -- they should be stricter on the time frame they are allowed to get the benefit. Two years."

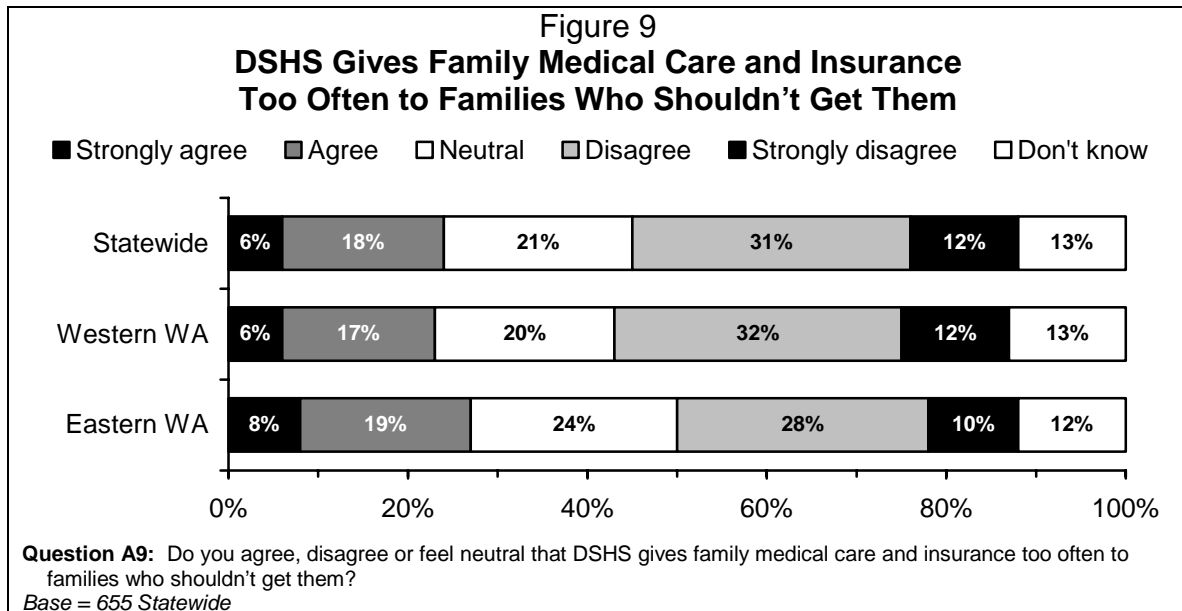
"Shorten up the welfare time limit; 5 years is quite a long time."

"I suggest no more than one year of services, then a review board that investigates the person thoroughly before allowing them to continue."

"Maybe check a little more into background -- see how long they have been in system. Check with relatives, friends, or acquaintances to see if there have been abuses in the system. That's the only thing I can think of."

NEEDY FAMILIES: DISTRIBUTION OF MEDICAL CARE AND INSURANCE

About one in four respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “DSHS gives family medical care and insurance too often to families who shouldn’t get them.” Of the remainder, 43% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, and 34% were neutral or didn’t know. This is shown in Figure 9.



Some subgroups were more likely than others to feel that medical care and insurance are given too often to families who should not get them (that is, who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement presented):

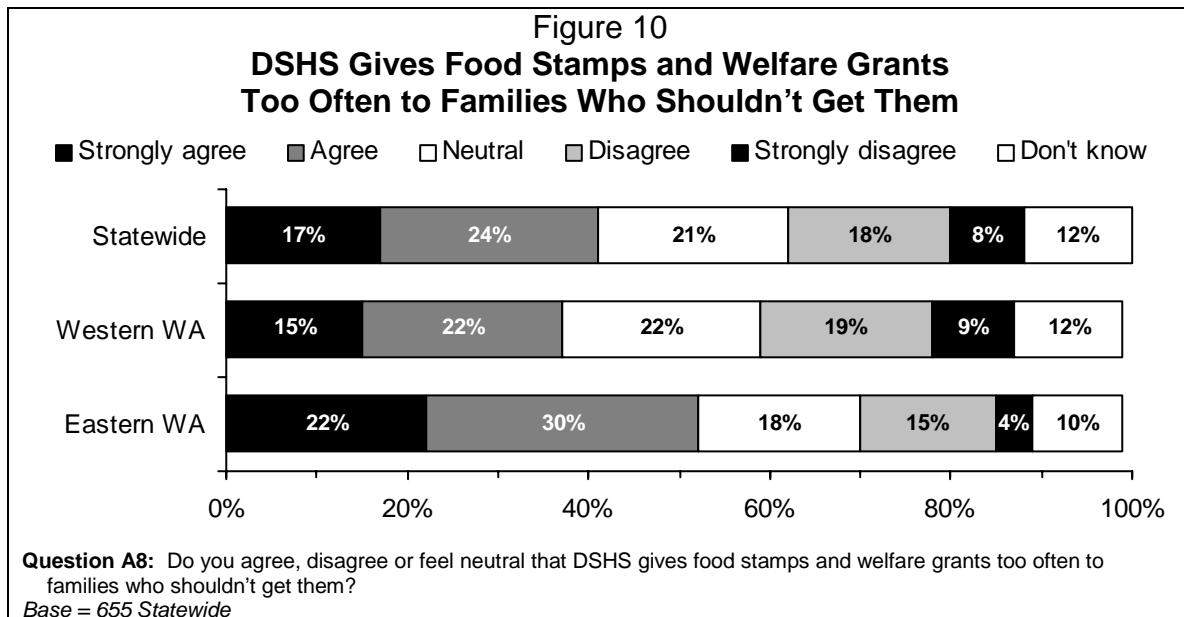
- Hispanic respondents (39% agreed that medical services are too often given to undeserving families) compared to White non-Hispanics (23% agreed)
- Men (30%) compared to women (18%)
- 55 to 64 year-olds (35%) and persons age 75 or older (41%), versus 45 to 54 year-olds (15%)
- Respondents lacking DSHS family services experience (28%), versus those who have this experience (20%)
- Those who learned about DSHS from friends and relatives (24%), newspapers and magazines (26%), TV and radio (27%), or who failed to name sources (29%), compared to those who learned about DSHS from the workplace (15%)

Some subgroups were more likely than others to feel that medical care and insurance are given to families who should get them (that is, they tended to disagree or strongly disagree with the statement presented):

- College graduates (50% disagreed), compared to respondents having some college education, but lacking diplomas (36%)
- Those aged 25 to 74 (43%), compared to those 75 years or older (15%)
- Women (47%) compared to men (38%)
- Those experienced with DSHS family services (52%), versus those lacking this experience (36%)
- Those who learned about DSHS services in the workplace (55%), rather than from friends and relatives (43%), newspapers and magazines (39%), or TV and radio (38%)

NEEDY FAMILIES: DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD STAMPS AND WELFARE GRANTS

Respondents showed more concern about the distribution of food stamps and welfare grants to needy families. As Figure 10 shows, more than four out of ten (41%) agreed or strongly agreed that, “DSHS gives food stamps and welfare grants too often to families who shouldn’t get them.” Of the remainder, 33% were neutral or didn’t know, and 26% disagreed or strongly disagreed.



Some subgroups were more likely than others to say that DSHS distributes food stamps and welfare grants to families who should not get them (that is, they tended to agree or strongly agree with the statement presented):

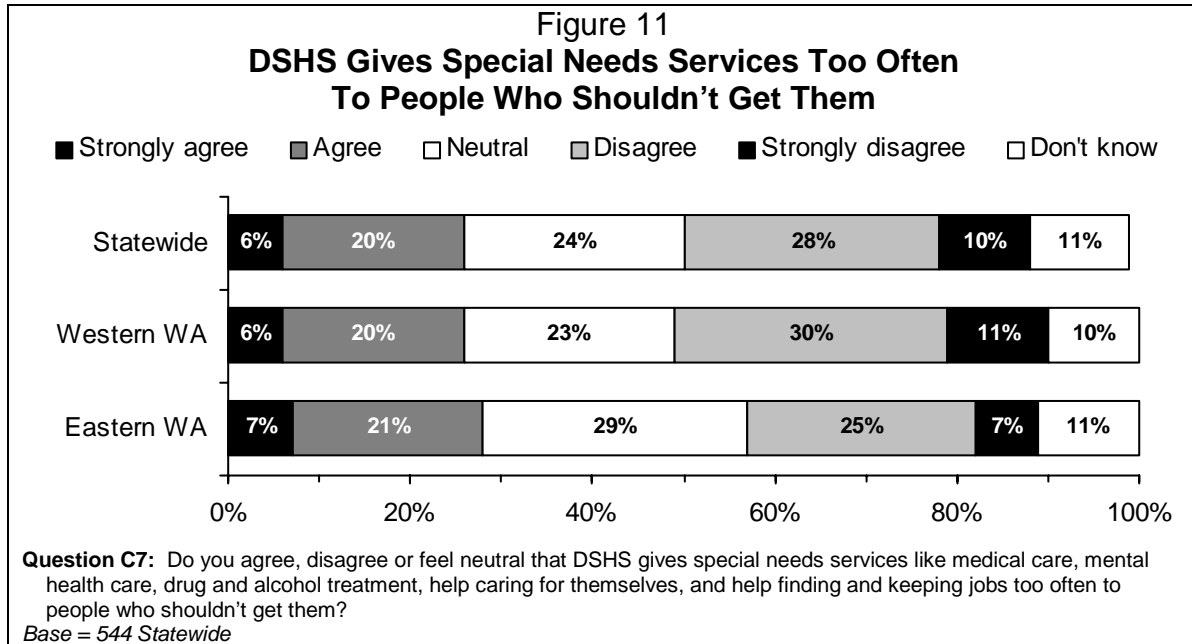
- Those with no college (51% agreed that these services are given to those who should not get them) and those who have some college education (43% agreed), compared to college graduates (28%)
- Eastern Washington residents (52%) versus Western Washington residents (37%)
- Those aged 55 to 64 years (53%), compared to ages 45 to 54 (36%) and ages 25 to 34 (32%)
- Those who learned about DSHS from friends and relatives (44%), newspapers and magazines (42%), or TV and radio (44%), compared to workplace sources (28%) or other sources (28%)

Some subgroups were more likely than others to feel that DSHS distributes food stamps and welfare grants to families who should get them (that is, to disagree or strongly disagree with the statement):

- Those with household incomes are over \$50,000 a year (32% disagreed), versus those with incomes under \$25,000 (22%)
- Residents of Western Washington (28%) versus Eastern Washington (19%)
- Those who learned about DSHS from workplace (36%) or other sources (38%), versus those who learned from friends and relatives (25%)

PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: DISTRIBUTION OF SPECIAL SERVICES

About one out of four respondents agreed or strongly agreed that, “DSHS gives special needs services like medical care, mental health care, drug and alcohol treatment, help caring for themselves, and help finding and keeping jobs too often to people who shouldn’t get them.” Of the remainder, 38% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 35% were neutral or didn’t know. See Figure 11 for details.



Subgroups more likely to believe that special needs services are given too often to those who should not get them (that is, to agree or strongly agree with the statement) included:

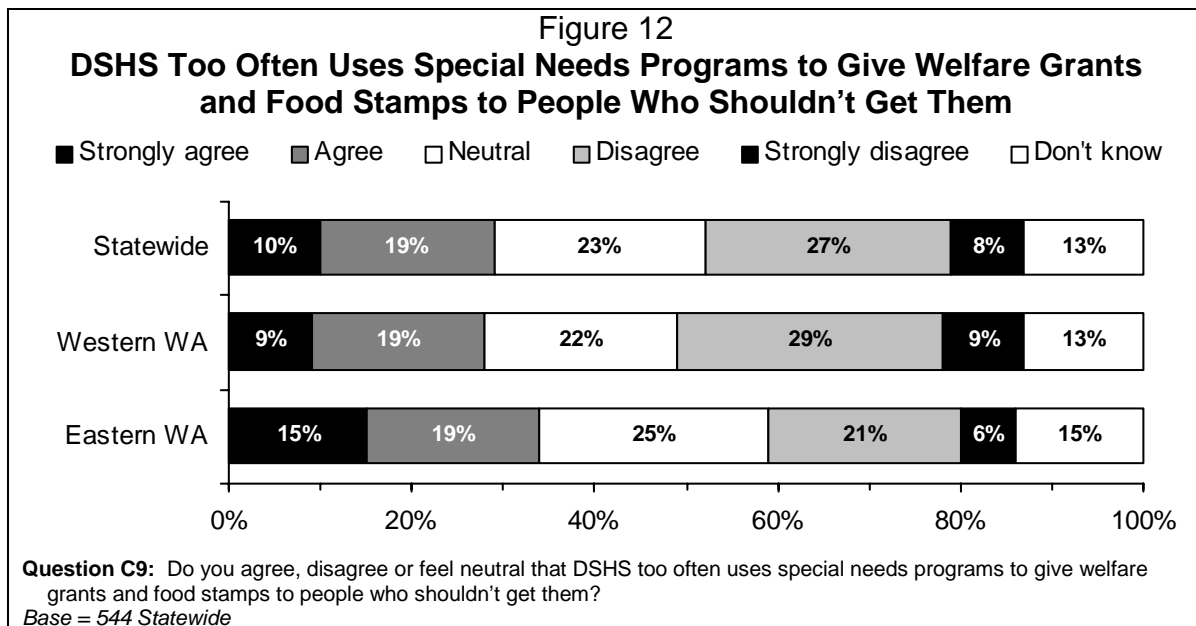
- Those with no college (35% agreed that special needs services are given to the undeserving), compared to college graduates (21%)
- Those from households with income between \$25,000 and \$50,000 (30%), compared to households with incomes of \$50,000 or more (19%)
- Those aged 75 years old or older (41%), compared to those between 45 and 54 years of age (19%)
- Those who are Hispanic (46%), compared to White non-Hispanics (24%)
- Those who learned about DSHS services from friends and relatives (28%) or newspapers and magazines (26%), rather than respondents learning from workplace sources (16%)

Subgroups more likely than others to think these special needs services are given to those who should get them (that is, they tended to disagree or strongly disagree with the statement) include:

- College graduates (52% disagreed), compared to those with less education (33%)
- Those living on higher incomes (\$50,000 or more per year – 53%), as opposed to those living on less (33%)
- Those aged 18 to 64 years (42%), compared to those 75 or older (13%)
- Those aged 45 to 54 years (50%), compared to 35 to 44 year-olds (34%)
- Those who are White and not Hispanic (41%), compared to Hispanics (24%)
- Those living in Western Washington (41%), compared to Eastern Washington (32%)
- Those who learned about DSHS services in the workplace (52%) or in other public places (54%), compared to those who learned from friends and relatives (39%), newspapers and magazines (37%), or who failed to specify their sources (32%)

PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: DISTRIBUTION OF GRANTS & FOOD STAMPS

Almost three out of ten (29%) respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “DSHS too often uses special needs programs to give welfare grants and food stamps to people who shouldn’t get them.” As Figure 12 indicates, 35% disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 36% were neutral or didn’t know.



Some subgroups were more likely than others to believe that special needs programs are too often used to get welfare grants and food stamps for those who should not get them (that is, they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement):

- Those without a college diploma (34% agreed that these services are given to the undeserving), compared to college graduates (20% agreed)
- Those with annual household incomes between \$25,000 and \$50,000 (34%), compared to household incomes over \$50,000 (23%)
- Men (34%) rather than women (25%)
- People 75 years old or older (54%), compared to those aged 18 to 54 years old (26%) and 65 to 74 year-olds (27%)
- Those with personal experience with DSHS special needs services (36%), versus those who had none (27%)
- Those who learned about DSHS services from their friends and family (30%), rather than workplace sources (20%)

Some subgroups were more likely to feel that special needs programs give welfare grants and food stamps to people who should get them (that is, they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the above question):

- College graduates (48%), compared to those with some college or less education (28%)
- Those in households earning \$50,000 or more per year (47%), compared to lower-income households (30%)
- Residents of Western Washington (37%), compared to Eastern Washington (27%)
- Persons aged 18 to 74 years old (37%), compared to those older (8%)
- Those who learned about DSHS from workplace sources or other public places (51% and 52%, respectively), rather than friends or relatives, newspapers or magazines (36%)

INTERACTION BETWEEN PERCEPTIONS OF ACCESS: DIFFICULTY AND DISTRIBUTION

The two major dimensions of access addressed in the survey, difficulty and distribution, appear to have a complex, almost contradictory relationship.

ACCESS: A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL CONCEPT

If perceptions of access were one-dimensional, survey respondents would view access to services as either easy or hard. Those who think it is *too hard* to get a service would also think that service is *seldom* given to the undeserving. And those who think it relatively *easy* to get a service would be more likely to think that the service is *often* given to the undeserving.

Findings. Survey results, as shown in Table 1, however, show that people don't think of access as simply easy or hard. The perception that it is easy to get services does *not* co-vary with the perception that services are given to the undeserving.

Table 1 Interaction Between Perceptions of Access			
OF THOSE WHO BELIEVED THAT THESE SERVICES	HAVE THESE CHARACTERISTICS	THIS %	ALSO BELIEVED THAT THESE SERVICES ARE
For Needy Families			
Medical Services	Too Difficult	26%	Given to the Undeserving
Medical Services	Not Too Difficult	26%	Given to the Undeserving
Medical Services	Given to the Undeserving	24%	Too Difficult
Medical Services	Not Given to Undeserving	24%	Too Difficult
Food Stamps & Welfare	Too Difficult	44%	Given to the Undeserving
Food Stamps & Welfare	Not Too Difficult	44%	Given to the Undeserving
Food Stamps & Welfare	Given to the Undeserving	18%	Too Difficult
Food Stamps & Welfare	Not Given to Undeserving	16%	Too Difficult
For Those with Special Needs			
Special Services	Too Difficult	35%	Given to the Undeserving
Special Services	Not Too Difficult	25%	Given to the Undeserving
Special Services	Given to the Undeserving	36%	Too Difficult
Special Services	Not Given to Undeserving	25%	Too Difficult
Food Stamps & Welfare	Too Difficult	44%	Given to the Undeserving
Food Stamps & Welfare	Not Too Difficult	26%	Given to the Undeserving
Food Stamps & Welfare	Given to the Undeserving	40%	Too Difficult
Food Stamps & Welfare	Not Given to Undeserving	22%	Too Difficult
Note: For the purposes of this analysis, "Not Too Difficult" and "Not Given to Undeserving" included neutral responses. "Don't Know" responses are excluded from the analysis.			

In fact, Table 1 shows that for services for special needs (both food stamps and welfare, and special services like medical care, mental health care, drug and alcohol treatment, help caring for themselves, and help finding and keeping jobs), the opposite was true. Those who thought that special needs services are too difficult to obtain were more likely than other respondents to also think that services were too often given to the undeserving. Those who thought the undeserving are too often given special needs services were more likely to think that it is too difficult to get such services.

In the case of needy families with children, the proportion of respondents believing that services (food stamps, welfare grants and medical services) are given to the undeserving was essentially the same whether or not the respondent believed that getting services is too difficult. Likewise, the proportion of respondents believing getting services is too difficult was not affected by whether or not the respondent believed that services are given to the undeserving.

Differences by Program. Table 1 also highlights some differences between programs. In three of the four programs considered, the proportion of those respondents who said it was too difficult to get service was very close to the proportion who said that too many undeserving get services. The results, however, were very different in the case of food stamps and welfare grants for needy families. In this case the proportion who said that services go to the undeserving was much greater than the proportion who said that services are too difficult to access. This finding suggests that the greatest concerns about abuse of DSHS programs relate to welfare grants and food stamps given to needy families.

WHO REPORTS A TWO-DIMENSIONAL CONCERN?

As noted earlier in this report, those with lower educational levels, and, in many cases, those with lower incomes are more likely than other survey respondents to report both that it is too difficult to get services and that too many who are undeserving get services.

Comments. Comments from survey respondents help to clarify the somewhat paradoxical answers to access questions. A number of respondents clearly articulated the belief that services are too difficult to access for some and too easy for others. Several recognized the challenges of determining who is truly “deserving.” Some representative comments:

IT IS TOO DIFFICULT TO GET SERVICES AND SOME UNDESERVING PEOPLE GET SERVICES

“It seems like some people get it and don’t deserve it, and some people who need help can’t get it.”

“There’re people who need it that don’t have it and people who have it that don’t need it”.

"Many families are taking advantage and many who need it truly are not getting what they need."

"Seems as though sometimes little "glitches" keep people who need from help, while others get help but don't really need it."

"There is a tendency for some families to continue on DSHS who could go out and care for themselves or get jobs and take care of themselves. I think some people who really need DSHS are falling through the cracks . . . I have a friend who needs assistance and it's a real struggle for her to feed her family . . . but she can't get assistance."

RECOGNIZING THE CHALLENGES

"I think their job is pretty much impossible. I think their efforts are valid and I have no idea how it should be done better. Sheer numbers of people involved, changes in society, which put people in need. Difficulty in assessing true need."

"They might investigate more on people that don't really need this -- you know, that could get out and work. I don't know how they could do that."

"I don't know. I know they try to monitor where money is going, but I know of a couple of cases the people on it could have done more to use it in a positive way to get themselves off it. But I guess that is a way of being used. There are so many people, it's hard to keep tabs on everyone getting assistance. I don't know how. They are doing the best they can."

"They screen the best they can, but someone is always going to abuse the system."

"I'm sure it's a big job, and people aren't necessarily honest. I've heard of people abusing the system; that makes it harder for the people who need it. I don't know how to fix it."

RECOMMENDED CHANGES IN DSHS

The concluding question of the survey asked respondents to specify changes that they thought DSHS should make in how they serve needy families, children and youth, and persons with special needs.

MAIN THEMES

The question of distribution of services, a topic of many survey questions, elicited the most comments – many pertaining to tightening standards and/or increased monitoring. Other main topics included concerns about DSHS staffing, resources and staff overwork; and a need for more and/or better child and youth services. A list comments by topic areas is displayed in Table 2.

TABLE 2 Suggestions for Change - Comments by Topic Area			
	Statewide (n=825)	Western WA (n=477)	Eastern WA (n=348)
GENERAL COMMENTS	16%	16%	16%
Nothing Needs to Change/Good Job	4%	3%	6%
Other General Comments	12%	13%	12%
ADVERTISING / PROMOTION	6%	7%	4%
STAFFING / RESOURCES	17%	20%	9%
DSHS Needs More Staff/Funding	11%	13%	5%
DSHS Staff are Overworked	8%	9%	5%
Increase Money/Grants for Needy	3%	3%	2%
Cut DSHS Funding/Staff	0%	0%	0%
DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICES	31%	30%	32%
MONITOR AND/OR TIGHTEN STANDARDS	22%	22%	22%
More Follow-Up/Monitoring	15%	14%	17%
Tighten Standards and Eligibility	9%	9%	8%
Tighten Requirements to Get Food Stamps	1%	1%	2%
Time and Work Limits	1%	1%	0%
Other Related to Monitoring/Oversight	2%	2%	1%
EASE STANDARDS AND ELIGIBILITY	9%	9%	11%
Ease Up on Standards/Eligibility	7%	7%	8%
Make it Easier to Get Food Stamps	2%	2%	2%
Other Related to Less Restrictions, Easing	1%	1%	1%
IMMIGRANTS, NON-CITIZENS, RACES	2%	1%	3%
Treat Racial/Ethnic Groups Equally	1%	0%	1%
Limit Aid to Non-Citizens	1%	1%	1%
Other Related to Immigrants	1%	1%	0%

SPECIFIC PROGRAMS	14%	14%	13%
Need More/Better Child & Youth Services	11%	11%	10%
Need More/Better ElderCare	3%	3%	3%
Positive Mention of Specific Program	6%	6%	6%
Other Related to Specific Programs	3%	3%	2%
EFFICIENCY - ORGANIZATION	3%	3%	3%
Streamline Programs; Make More Efficient	2%	2%	2%
Privatize Programs	2%	2%	1%
Other Related to Efficiency	0%	0%	0%
EFFICIENCY - REDUCE PAPERWORK/WAITS	3%	2%	5%
DON'T KNOW	35%	34%	36%
REFUSED	1%	1%	2%
<p>Question D2: What changes do you think DSHS should make in how they serve needy families, children, youth and persons with special needs?</p> <p>Note: Percentages in bold represent all the respondents who made any comments covered in that major topic area. The subcategories listed below a major topic may total to a larger percentage than that listed for the topic, because a respondent may make comments that fall in more than one sub-topic area.</p>			

REPRESENTATIVE COMMENTS¹.

In earlier sections, this report provided representative comments relating to specific survey questions. Page references for these comments are listed at the end of this section. Following are representative comments from topic areas not previously discussed:

STAFFING / RESOURCES

NEED FOR STAFFING, OVERWORK

“Caseworkers have too many cases, and not enough resources.”

“They need to have more staffing.”

“I feel strongly that they do a good job but there's far too few people trying to do so much good work!”

“The number of caseworkers. Those people taking care of those kids are overwhelmed; the caseload per worker is ghastly. It's a matter of budgetary problems.”

“It's like a lot of government programs, undermanned, too big caseloads. In my personal experience, a couple times the caseworker just couldn't keep up with all the needs of all the people they handled.”

¹ A complete listing of all client comments with corresponding client demographics can be found in Appendix 6.

"They need more educated staff, I hear from current employees, as well as better wages for staff."

"They need to pay their employees more so that they will stay and be stable on their job."

"Biggest problem with DSHS is they can't attract and keep qualified people; they don't pay enough."

"Most of my limited experience has been concerned with the lack of personnel to deal with these issues and probably the high burnout rate from what I've heard for agency social worker."

"Need more qualified workers that are not burnt out."

"Spread too thin".

"They should have more caseworkers, especially for children."

FUNDING

"I think that they do the best that they can with their resources, so more funding is needed for the programs. The cost of living is high now; the families usually need larger apartments than the grants allow -- the amount of the grant does not equal the cost of living. That is all, but the cost of living is high."

"I don't think they give them enough food stamps to last a month, and they don't get an adequate increase in pay. Everything goes up but their check doesn't go up. They have to bum off others or go to the food bank or kids go hungry by the last week of the month."

"Get away from the politicians and what they're doing with our money. I have personal experience with people being helped by DSHS. These people could be helped a lot more if there were adequate funding and more workers. Our politicians don't seem to be aware of how many people need help and how much funding DSHS really needs."

"Olympia is only worried about the budget so they're always cutting the budget. There's a lot of people out there who need help."

"They should provide their services to more people. Give out more food stamps, have more drug treatment facilities and stuff like that. More money from Congress."

"I think they need to look at the differences in the cost of living that's out here and make adjustments for that. I know people who have to choose between

their medication and rent, and they need to look at these things and adjust for that."

CUTTING STAFF (VERY FEW COMMENTS INVOLVED THIS)

"They need to get rid of 3/4 of people working at DSHS so more money goes to helping people that really need help instead of paying towards DSHS workers."

SPECIFIC PROGRAM SUGGESTIONS

VARIED PROGRAMS

"More services for the DDD population -- developmental disabilities. Stronger licensing for foster care."

"And I also think there should be a program so kids can go to camp etc. To do the things other kids with money can do."

"They should push the incentives programs every time they have the chance. These work better to motivate individuals to continue to help themselves."

"More preventative programs."

"They should make it easier for families to choose their own doctors instead of restrictions on medical providers and services."

"I would like to see more drug and alcohol programs for people who need them more often. Contraception, safe sex, and pregnancy intervention services should be more readily available."

"They ought to be more aggressive in collecting child support, and going after the parties responsible for paying."

"Spiritual help and counseling."

"Try to reach more homes with single moms. More emphasis on prevention like offering free birth control and education of youth, so that we don't have so many unwanted children."

"There's not enough or adequate homeless shelters in town."

"There should be stronger support for children as opposed to their parents."

"Absent fathers that owe child support should have tracking system if move out of county."

"I'm really concerned about the 5 year limit on food stamps and welfare. I worry that some families may be out in the streets; some people that need these services may not be obtain them as long as they really need."

CHILD PROTECTION

SHOULD BE MORE AGGRESSIVE (MAJORITY OF CHILD PROTECTION COMMENTS)

"I think they place children back in harmful situations too quickly."

"They need to make some changes in their system to not put these children that have been taken away from their mothers or fathers back in the home. There are too many children getting killed or beaten to death and as a taxpayer, it makes me very angry."

"Also, in child abuse cases, the hands of social workers are tied and they can't get the help some children need until it's too late."

"Take more direct approach to problems so the children aren't back into the DSHS service just 2 days later."

"But if we're going to take care of anyone, it's our kids. Over the years there's all these cases of a child being returned to a situation where he gets killed."

"And they definitely need to investigate child abuse reports more thoroughly."

"The children are my main concern here. Any time you can pick up a newspaper and see where a drug-addicted mother and an abusive alcoholic father can regain custody for their children and then beat the child to death - something is very wrong."

"I think they should be more proactive in addressing child abuse issues. Earlier intervention. I think children should be removed from unfit parents earlier than they do."

"They need to be more aggressive in the defense of children."

"I think they should have followed up better with child protective services that were about the abuse I and my family received from my parents. Nothing ever happened except phone calls, and they received verbal warnings but nothing more was done."

"CPS is slow to respond."

SHOULD BE LESS AGGRESSIVE AND MIXED COMMENTS

"Lots of times they drag these kids from the family and put them in foster homes and the foster homes are worse than where they came from -- and it's all about money."

"Knowing the difficult job it is dealing with youth, I wish there could be a better way than not returning children to abusive homes and parents. I don't know how to solve the problem."

"Seems overly eager to remove children from their homes."

"I think that they're on the overzealous on child protection and I think that they should prevent the kids from being bounced around from home to home in foster care. In other words, if they're going to be placed in homes keep them there. Quit trying to bounce them back to the natural family."

"I'm kind of old-fashioned when it comes to interaction with the family members. I think there is too much government in the family. But as I say there is times it is needed, but lots of times the innocent are persecuted."

"Sometimes, I think DSHS interferes excessively in intervening in parent/child relationships."

EFFICIENCY - CHANGES IN ORGANIZATION

"Privatize a lot of their functions and services."

"Split up a little bit. It's such a big organization it's a bit unwieldy. Have so many programs that cover so many people."

"More of their services should be delivered through the private sector. The organization is much too large to function effectively. What they should do is some of the delivery of their services should be subcontracted."

"Get rid of some of the upper echelons of administrative workers and send more workers into the field."

"Get rid of the director. Listen to the people paying the bills, people that work for a living -- the taxpayers. We got to stop being this warm and fuzzy organization. Less liberal, more conservative politics -- I guess."

"Get rid of governor. Replace people in government."

"Inherently, the bureaucracy is so big that it's unlikely it can ever operate efficiently."

“Get out of the health insurance business. Overhaul the entire DSHS department. Doing a great job with WorkFirst and welfare work programs!”

“Needs to encourage non-government programs and solutions. Government doing too much -- replacing roles of church and family. Yes, yes. I favor curtailment or reduction of many of these programs; people have grown too dependent on them.”

“I think they actually do too much. They should be divided up into more than just the one agency. Too many services under one umbrella. As our population grows it gets more difficult and complex to help too many different kinds of people”.

“I think they should re-organize the whole system. They could start with legislators adequately funding the need.”

“It sounds like they are doing too much and maybe they should be divided up. They can specialize for the different needs. Food stamps are really different from mentally ill.”

“Cut overhead. Become more efficient as though they were a private business. Citizen oversight committee or professional consulting. I think their money would be better spent directing their money through faith-based organizations instead of trying to be all things to all people. Start by initial goal 50% of their budget being disbursed to local faith and charitable organizations.”

Comments Relating To Specific Survey Questions Can Be Found On The Following Pages

General Comments² - page 10

Advertising/Promotion (Outreach/Information) - page 19

Distribution of Services.

 Making it easier – pages 18-19

 Specific groups who Abuse – pages 26-28

 Solutions to Abuse – Screening, monitoring, Fraud Investigation &

 Time Limits – Pages 28-30

 Too Difficult and Some Undeserving Get – pages 40-41

 Recognizing the Challenges - page 41

Efficiency - Process, paperwork and waiting times - page 18

² These samples are mainly laudatory in nature. Other general comments concerned a wide variety of topics, impeding categorization.

